

Program: Executive Team Development Workshop (ETDW)

Background: US federal district courts enjoy a great deal of autonomy in setting court policies and managing operations. As a result, the roles and responsibilities of chief judges and clerks of court in day-to-day court management vary among courts around the country. Each time a new district chief judge or a new clerk is appointed, there is an opportunity to redefine these roles and responsibilities to meet the needs of the court and the individuals involved. However, this process can become strained in the absence of clear communication about issues such as leadership, management, decision-making, planning and problem solving.

ETDW was developed in response to requests by courts to assist them in managing transitions following the appointment of new chief judges and new clerks. Both chief judges and clerks reported that they sometimes faced difficulties in communicating with one another and managing overlapping responsibilities regarding court operations and administration.

Participants: Pairs of newly appointed chief judges and newly appointed clerks (court administrators) are eligible to participate in ETDW. The chief judge and a clerk must attend the same workshop together to qualify for participation in the program.

Instructor: The instructor for ETDW is not a judge, court clerk or attorney. He is a specialist in management, strategic planning and organizational development for public sector organizations. While he has worked with the federal judiciary on management issues for several years, his primary area of expertise is in healthcare management. The Federal Judicial Center chose this instructor because of his ability to apply effective and contemporary business management principles to public sector organizations. The judges and clerks benefit from a non-judicial trainer because of the fresh perspective that he brings to the topic.

Purpose: ETDW is designed to enhance the administrative effectiveness and efficiency of the court through the promotion of a team approach to management between chief judges and clerks. ETDW is aimed at assisting chief judges and clerks to establish positive professional relationships by assessing participants' personality traits and work styles that may influence executive team effectiveness; defining key areas of chief judge-clerk responsibilities, activities and interaction; and establishing decision-making and day-to-day management frameworks to optimize executive team effectiveness.

Objectives: By the end of the 1½-day workshop, chief judges and chief clerk pairs should:

- 1) Understand the characteristics of their own personality types and how their personal styles affect work, management and decision-making processes, as well as executive team relationships.
- 2) Understand different leadership styles and identify their own leadership styles.

- 3) Identify the challenges faced by newly appointed chief judges during their transition from judge to chief judge.
- 4) Recognize and internalize the characteristics of effective chief judge-clerk relationships and develop a model for their own relationship.
- 5) Understand how different leadership and management styles, and different chief judge-clerk relationships influence executive teams and the courts they manage.
- 6) Agree the best model of chief judge-clerk relationship and optimal work styles for their court, and identify the implications of this model for their relationship and court.
- 7) Master delegation skills.
- 8) Identify expectations, roles and responsibilities based on agreed model.
- 9) Develop a practical action plan for strengthening their chief judge-clerk relationship and implementing appropriate changes in their courts to maximize the benefits of steps outlined in the action plan.

Curriculum and Agenda: ETDW covers the following topics:

- Court Leadership and Leadership Models
- The Transition from Judge to Chief Judge
- Effective Chief Judge-Clerk Relationships
- Management
- Building Effective Teams
- Delegation
- Action Plans

Evaluation: The program is evaluated through use of anonymous questionnaires, which are distributed and collected at the end of the program, and by follow up interviews with individual participants.

Results: Chief judge participants report that one of the most important outcomes of the program has been better understanding the day-to-day challenges faced by their clerks in administering their duties and meeting the needs of the chief judge, other judges and staff in the court. Additionally, chief judges reported that they better understand the need not only to serve as leaders and representatives of their courts but also as managers within the court. Finally, chief judges noted that they were able to improve communications with chief clerks and with other staff members by recognizing their own communication styles and developing plans for regular meetings with chief clerks and court staff.

Clerks of court, who have participated in ETDW, typically feel much more comfortable with their chief judges and more able to raise difficulties or problems with their chief judges in a proactive and positive manner. Clerks have benefited by increased efficiency in their courts by resolving problems more quickly through regular meetings with the chief judges and staff members. Finally, clerks report that their own management skills improved following ETDW because they were able to apply the same leadership, management and delegation principles to their relationships with other court staff.